ABC's of Media Engagement

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"Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets."

- Napoleon -

Military Cultural Assumptions – The 4 "A's"

- **Annoyance**
  - The media is nothing more than an annoyance on the battlefield
- **Avoidance**
  - The media is not beneficial to the Army mission or your career… Avoid at all costs
- **Answer the Facts**
  - We are taught to answer the facts, not make deductions about the greater implications of those facts
- **Access**
  - When we get into combat operations, the tendency is to limit access to the media due to the classified nature of the information

Preparing Soldiers - The 4 "Be's"

- **Be Open/ Honest**
  - Don't spin… Tell it like it is.
  - Lead by Example
  - Encourage subordinates to engage

- **Be Responsive**
  - Timeliness and newsworthy-ness are important.
  - Correct errors
  - Respond to the enemy use of media

- **Be Proactive**
  - Deliberately plan media engagements
  - Don't ignore Media on the battlefield

- **Be Relevant**
  - Understand the broader context.
  - Newsworthiness is important to the media and the public,

***** Understand not every engagement will go the way you want it to**

Four C's for Leaders and PAO's

- **Challenge Assumptions**
  - My Experience – Almost no preparation for the job
  - I thought PAO's were the only ones who engaged the media
  - Information does not play a supporting role, it is the decisive operation in this conflict

- **Choose to engage** – if you don't engage, who will?
  - The media will fill air time with something
  - If you don't engage, they will not have a complete picture – Mark Twain once said **"A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes."**
  - Info we provide must be news worthy and timely
  - Think about information in the planning process – not as an afterthought

- **Confront Constraints**
  - The bureaucrats will tell you "NO"
  - No is the starting point for negotiations – Don't take it for an answer.

- **Consider the Consequences** – Operations that are synched with a solid information plan win twice
  - Tactically on the battlefield and Strategically in living rooms around the world

Questions